



News Release

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Contacts: Kate Lynch, Communications Office

360-236-4072

Good things don't always come in small packages

Keep small objects out of small hands, take care with button batteries

OLYMPIA — You're a careful parent or grandparent who makes sure that toys are safe and you buy "flameless" candles to keep your home and family safe. But inside that musical holiday card and flameless candle are small "button" batteries that can cause serious harm in the hands of young children.

"We are seeing more very young children swallowing small button batteries out of everything from musical holiday cards, wrist watches, and thermometers to small toys and remote controls," said Dr. Kathy Sie, surgeon and director of the Childhood Communication Center at Seattle Children's Hospital. "It's much worse than when a child swallows a coin. When a battery gets stuck in a child's throat, saliva triggers an electrical current that causes a chemical reaction within a few minutes of contact. Serious internal injury can happen in about two hours."

[A video on button battery safety](#) can be viewed on Seattle Children's YouTube site.

According to [Safe Kids USA](#), more than 3,400 swallowing cases involving all sizes of button batteries were reported in 2010 in the United States. There were 19 serious injuries and some children died. All fatalities and most (85 percent) of major injuries were among children age four and younger.

"The problem is these batteries are found in so many everyday objects like electronic car door openers on key rings and bathroom scales," said State Health Officer Dr. Maxine Hayes, a pediatrician. "Parents should keep these devices out of reach and lock away loose batteries. Because these products are not specifically for children, they don't have the kind of safety controls that things like toys have."

A child who has swallowed a button battery may wheeze, drool, cough, or gag. The child may refuse to eat, have decreased appetite, complain of chest discomfort, or have difficulty swallowing.

What to do if a child swallows a coin-sized battery

- Go to an emergency room immediately. Tell emergency staff it might be a battery.
- If possible, give them the identification number from the battery's package, or bring the package with you.
- Do not let the child eat or drink, and do not induce vomiting

More information about protecting children from coin batteries can be found at [Safe Kids USA](#).

A host of holiday injuries are reported to the [U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission](#) each year. The commission estimates the number has grown in the past couple of years. Although deaths and injuries from Christmas tree and candle fires are down, reports of falls from ladders while hanging decorations, and cuts and scrapes from broken glass ornaments are going up.

“Breakable ornaments shouldn’t be hung low on a tree where young children and pets can knock them down,” Dr. Hayes continues. “And even though we’re seeing fewer fires, take care when using candles, woodstoves, and fireplaces.”

Explore safety tips and get some advice for kids from the Muppets at the [Safety at Home](#) website, sponsored by the Underwriters Laboratories.

The [Department of Health website](#) (www.doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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